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Some significant avifaunal records from Bangladesh, including first record of Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

SAYAM U. CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh is ornithologically one of the least well studied countries in Asia. This short note presents some noteworthy observations from Bangladesh between March 2008 and December 2009, including one new species for the country. These observations came from a number of surveys and opportunistic birdwatching trips to different parts of Bangladesh.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

Dilip Das and I observed a total of 10 individuals and found one nest of Black Francolin during 14–15 September 2009 in Kazipara (26°29'21.04"N 88°20'10.77"E), Tetulia, Panchagarh, in the far north-west of Bangladesh, along the international border with India. The habitat used by this population in Tetulia is chiefly cultivated land: a combination of maize, sugarcane and sesame fields, grasslands and patches of scrub dotted with small bamboo patches, along with tea gardens and their environs. The national status of this bird is Critically Endangered (IUCN Bangladesh 2000). Records away from this Tetulia population are limited to a female found in Modhupur forest in January 1999 and one in Sangu valley in 2006 (Thompson & Johnson 2003, Siddiqui *et al.* 2008). Presently, Kazipara in Tetulia probably holds the largest population of the species in Bangladesh.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

One Woolly-necked Stork was observed (and photographed) flying south-east over Jamtala Khal, Katka, Sundarbans East Wildlife Sanctuary (21°51'7.01"N 89°46'27.39"E) at a height of c.200 m at 14h28 on 10 October 2009 by Enam Talukdar, Gertrud Denzau, Helmut Denzau, Monirul Khan, Ronald Halder, Sirajul Hossain, Zamiruddin Faisal and myself. The most recent confirmed record of this stork from Bangladesh was in 1888 in Sylhet division (Siddiqui *et al.* 2008). Sight records reported by Sharif Khan from Bagerhat in 1970 and

Satkhira in 1989 (M. M. H. Khan *in litt.* 2011) were discounted as unreliable.

Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis*

Farhad Pavel and I observed a Spot-bellied Eagle Owl at 17h15 on 7 August 2008 in the north-eastern part (24°19'37.14"N 91°47'33.02"E) of Lawachara National Park, Srimangal, Moulvibazar. The bird's large size, deep black bars on pale white breast, and light yellow bill were the key field marks used to identify this species, which is a rare resident in Bangladesh (Siddiqui *et al.* 2008).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

Three Black-headed Buntings were located on 10 October 2009 at Katka, Sundarbans East Wildlife Sanctuary (21°51'13.20"N 89°46'55.45"E), by Ronald Halder, Zamiruddin Faisal and myself. The three birds were observed perching on a *Phyllanthus emblica* tree at Katka meadow for five minutes (17h00–17h05), using 10×42 binoculars. In addition, photographs were taken by each observer.

The birds exhibited a distinctive bunting profile, with longer tails and stubby, conical bills, and were immediately identified as an *Emberiza* species. Absence of a submoustachial stripe and streaking on breast, breast-sides and flanks separated the birds from the four *Emberiza* species hitherto recorded in Bangladesh—Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola*, Chestnut-eared Bunting *E. fucata*, Little Bunting *E. pusilla* and Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala* (Rashid 1967, Husain 1979, Khan 1982, Harvey 1990, Thompson *et al.* 1993, Grimmett *et al.* 1998, IUCN Bangladesh 2000, Grewal *et al.* 2002, Thompson & Johnson 2003, Khan 2008, Siddiqui *et al.* 2008). Separation of non-breeding and female plumages of Black-headed Bunting and Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps* is difficult but the observers are confident that the birds were Black-headed Buntings

because they showed: a relatively long, conical bill; heavily chestnut-tinged uppertail-coverts and rump; and a dark crown. All three birds were aged as immature on account of their pale yellow undertail-coverts, fawn underparts and worn yellowish flanks. Earlier published checklists for Bangladesh list four *Emberiza* species (see above), but none mentions *E. melanocephala*; hence it can be considered a new species for Bangladesh.

Black-headed Bunting breeds in the western Palaearctic and Iran. It winters mainly in cultivated fields in southern Pakistan, west and central India and infrequently eastern Nepal and eastern India, with a few recent records from Jalpaiguri, West Bengal (S. Sen pers. comm. 2011). It has a known tendency to vagrancy further east with records from South-East Asia in north-west, central and southern Thailand, Singapore, northern Laos, northern Vietnam (Byers *et al.* 1995, Rasmussen & Anderton 2005, Robson 2008), southern China, Japan and northern Borneo (Dymond 1999).

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Autumn migration of an Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* from Mongolia to the Indian Ocean tracked by satellite

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Introduction

Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* breed in the Eastern Palearctic from Transbaikalia, Russia, and central Mongolia east to Ussuriland (south-eastern Russian Far East) and south to the Qinling Mountain range in central China (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). This small falcon undertakes one of the most notable migrations of any bird of prey, migrating between its east Asian breeding range and its southern African wintering range. Amur Falcons depart their breeding areas in late August and September and form large migratory flocks, moving south through China skirting the eastern edge of the Himalaya to reach north-east India and Bangladesh, where they settle temporarily to fatten before embarking on the latter stage of the migration through the Indian subcontinent and across the Indian Ocean to equatorial Africa (Clement & Holman 2001, Bildstein 2006). The journey of 3,000 km across the Indian Ocean typically takes place in late November and December, aided by the prevailing easterly winds (Bildstein 2006, Anderson 2009).

The Amur Falcon is not uncommon across most of its breeding range, although detailed information on its population status and trends is lacking (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). It is a common breeding species in the major river valleys of the forest steppe zone of central and eastern Mongolia, where it typically occupies old nests of Eurasian Magpies *Pica pica* for breeding. Currently there are no

major conservation concerns for the species, although it is known to be harvested for food during autumn passage through north-east India (Naoraji 2006). Satellite telemetry allows the routes of migrating raptors to be mapped (Meyberg & Fuller 2007), whilst the recent development of lightweight transmitters (<9.5 g) has enabled the technology to be applied to small migratory falcons such as Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonora* (Gschweng *et al.* 2009, López-López *et al.* 2009) and Hobby *F. subbuteo* (Meyburg *et al.* 2011). In this paper we describe the autumn migration pathway of a single Amur Falcon fitted with a satellite transmitter at its breeding site in central Mongolia as part of a pilot study for implementing the activities listed in the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) African-Eurasian Migratory Birds of Prey Memorandum of Understanding.

Methods

An adult female Amur Falcon was trapped on 21 July 2009 at its nesting site (47°39'43.0"N 105°51'53.8"E, altitude 1,378 m) in the Khustayn Nuruu National Park, Tov Province, central Mongolia. We fitted a 9.5 g solar-powered satellite transmitter (PTT-100, Microwave Telemetry Inc., Columbia, MD, USA) by means of a Teflon ribbon harness (Kenward 2001). The duty cycle of the satellite transmitter was programmed for 10 hours on and 48 hours off. The total weight of the PTT and harness was 11 g. The bird weighed 199 g when